

I'm Never Alone. by ej_writer

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Summary:

Season three AU where instead of Heathers parents, Neil and Susan fall the unfortunate (or not so unfortunate) victims to the mind flayer.

I'm Never Alone.

The water is freezing. Her head is pounding. Her mouth tastes like copper and chemicals and asphalt. Billy said everything was going to be okay now, and Heather had no choice but to believe him.

She doesn't remember him saying it out loud, but she knows Billy's trying to help. Being trapped out in the heat his first day with the monster inside him had made his body feel like it was tearing in two. It stood to reason the monster hooking its claws in her mind would go easier if her body wasn't fighting it off.

He filled the bath with ice water and put her in it. Held her under with two strong hands on her shoulders until she heard it, the monster's voice telling her its plan.

Billy only lets her up then, tears running down his own face. His wordless apology echoes over and over again in her head as he tries to soothe the situation in the only way he could. Heather wonders if she's even alive anymore to have drowned.

From the bathroom, past the ringing in Heather's ears, they hear the front door open and slam shut again. Two voices carry through the house, an argument between a man and woman she thinks she recognizes as Billy's parents.

Heather feels nothing for them, not even a flinch when the echo of their shouting rings through the small bathroom, but it makes Billy's body tense, and his pupils dilate.

Heather closes her eyes and tries to listen, but her thoughts are too fuzzy. The shadow is saying something to Billy, something it doesn't want her to hear. Their thoughts are linked now, but it's careful about guarding the plan, only telling them what they need to know to get it done.

They stand at the same time, Heather from the now nearly overflowing bathtub as the ice began to melt, and Billy from beside it where the air vent had been sending a chill over his clammy skin.

Only, there is no Billy and Heather anymore. The shadow had changed since it's last host was taken from it. Even when they're docile, they're lost. Forced to sit and watch as someone who isn't them controls their body for horrors and mundanities alike.

Heather turns to the mirror. Billy hands her a pair of sweatpants to put on over her suit. They flash identical numb smiles. A stray tear runs down Billy's cheek.

The noise has died down outside of the bathroom. It sounds like somebody must have won the argument. You can't win what's going to happen next.

Billy opens the door, the tiniest smudge of blood smearing against the frame just above the doorknob. Neil must've known he was in there, because he was waiting for him.

She gathered he was like that, Neil was. Always trying to pick a fight with his son. Even now Heather could Billy's fear, only she knew too it wasn't for what would happen to him. She could hear him pleading with himself to not feel like was what his father deserved.

Neil, leaning back in a leather recliner chair, snaps something like, "Boy, I told you not to use all the hot water."

But then Heather steps out behind him, and Neils face changes. From tight disappointment and anger from the fight to curiosity, a look that said he was impressed almost. "Your little queer phase finally over, then? I knew I could work it outta you, and look, you've even got yourself a pretty little girl there."

His eyes rake over Heather's body, and she feels a flash of something in the back of her head, a feeling that was distinctly human, fear and disgust and embarrassment. It's quickly overshadowed by a white hot hatred that isn't hers, nor the boy beside hers. It could've been, and really it should've been, but it belongs to the monster.

Billy puts his hand on Heather's shoulder, his fingers digging into her skin just enough it'll leave a bruise. She knows that that's him, her Billy and not the monster. That he's just trying to cling to *something*, protect her if he can. Her arm feels like it's made of lead, trying to

control it on her own, but she fights through it to put her hand on top of his. To show him she gets it. That she can still hear him.

Still, the dull ache from his grip goes mostly unnoticed, Heather's entire body already stiff and in pain from all that had happened since this started. It's then that she realizes, she doesn't even know how long ago that was.

How many days had it been since she was taken at the pool? Since she was in the ground floor of the steelworks? Or even how many hours since being held under the freezing cold water until the monster took total control?

She tries to think back on it, but is met with a searing pain behind her temples, her own memories protected from her. She shudders, and hopelessly returns to the present.

Billy smiles a much too wide smile and the both of them take a step forward. His tone sounds practiced, flat almost as he says, "Dad, this is Heather."

Neil's eyes narrow. Whether out of suspicion or disapproval is unclear, unimportant really. Then he snickers, even though nothing's funny, "The Holloway girl? What the hell do you think you're getting into, boy?"

It's Heather's turn to smile sweetly, giving an automated answer, "Your son is a very sweet boy Mr. Hargrove. I assure you he has nothing but good intentions."

Neil nods, "Well you know the rules, boy. As long as you don't knock her up, I don't give a shit what you do. Just don't make her daddy angry." Neil winks, takes a long swig from one of the beer bottles in front of him on the coffee table.

Big mistake. This gives the monster an idea.

He stands, setting the empty bottle back down, the glass makes a dull thud on the wooden surface, a hollow echo of what's guaranteed to come now. "Don't let her down, William." Neil sneers, and makes yet another grave mistake, turning his back to them to leave.

Heather picks up that very same bottle. Her daddy doesn't let her drink beer, for an empty bottle it's heavier than she expected. Perfect to do what needs to be done.

Billy stops Neil from walking away, taking long strides over to his father and putting his hand over his shoulder, just ghosting over it so he isn't touching him, the guilty of a son who had dreams and nightmares about this moment all his life. "Hold on a second, dad."

Heather carefully puts the bottle in Billy's left hand just as Neil turns around. Billy wastes no time drawing the weapon back, but they still both catch the slightest moment of realization that registers on Neil's face just as Billy swings it.

The glass bottle shatters when it makes contact the back of his head. From the sound of it, Heather's pretty sure his skull does too.

Her eyelids flutter, but it makes her watch. Forces her to appreciate how much more gentle it had let Billy be with her. Tortures her with the thought that its sympathy could mean that maybe she'll survive this all.

Neil falls hard, Billy rolls him over onto his back with his boot. He's still breathing, but blood quickly seeps into the old carpet down to the hardwood underneath. A tear drips off the end of Billy's nose just as Susan comes running.

He drops what's left of the bottle, there's blood dripping from his fingertips, broken glass shards stuck in his unfeeling hand. The monster in his body lies, "Susan I-I didn't mean to..."

Her face goes pale, and her response is simple, "Is he alive?" It's unclear whether it's shock or disinterest that's keeping her so calm.

Billy continues to feign innocence, "I-I don't know I-"

"Calm down, Billy." Susan cuts him off, and it's suddenly clear that it's fear keeping her rational. Her hands shake as she reaches out to him, putting her hand on her step sons chest and making him take a few steps back from his father.

Heather plays the part as well. She jumps back with her hand over

her mouth and a sharp gasp, entirely unconvincing in her numb imitation of fear.

It doesn't matter, because Susan isn't worried about her, she's afraid of Billy, too focused on trying to talk him down to worry about the girl. "Just tell me what happened."

Billy stays silent, and that's Heather's cue.

Subtly as she can manage, she slides the crystalline ashtray off the entertainment center, taking advantage of the fact that Susan has her back to her talking to Billy to do the same thing he had done to his father, and to her at the pool, and crashes it into the back of Susan's skull.

The ashtray doesn't break. Susan gasps, her eyes going wide. It takes another two hits for knees to give out. Her blood looks sickeningly dark in her light red hair. It drips in thick drops from her crystal weapon.

Heather stares apathetically down at the two bodies. It doesn't look like Susan is breathing anymore. Billy kneels down and checks, his hands shaking badly. She can tell he's fighting it. She wishes she was so brave.

The shadow knows this too though, and it must say something to him, because Billy looks up at Heather and squares his jaw, pupils so wide there's only the smallest rim of dark blue around them. In that moment, any hope Heather might have had ceases. Her safety is merely a trap meant to keep Billy from trying too hard to break the shadows hold on him.

Billy stands abruptly and shoulders past her, snatching the phone from the side table, yanking the cord from its base and binding Susan's wrists with it. He doesn't bother tying her ankles. It doesn't look like she'll be waking up any time soon.

Neil doesn't get off so easily. He's tied up with braided fishing wire, the kind Susan uses for her beading work but that is strong enough to cut down to bone if you aren't careful. It digs into his skin and draws more blood.

Silently they agree that Heather isn't suited to carry them out. She takes the car keys off of Billy's belt loop and goes to open the trunk. It doesn't seem big enough for two adults. Her eyes close, and she remembers how hard it had been for her to breathe. Remembers screaming and kicking at the tail lights.

There's a small pool of her blood staining the material from her time in the trunk. Her head pounds painfully, her own cries echoing in the back of her mind. A car drives past on the road, breaking her thoughts and making her head snap up.

On the inside, she's screaming for help, clawing her way over to that car and running from the murder scene in Billy's living room. But she's trapped, in more ways than one.

She can't cry out, she can't even move freely. Even if she could, who would believe her? Her parents already hated Billy before, what would they do if she said he was making her murder people against their will? They'd probably disown her and pretend they never even had a daughter. Blame it on that damned Hargrove boy and his negative influences on their once sweet little girl.

It doesn't matter. *None* of it matters.

The car drives off, and Billy kicks the front door open carrying an unconscious Susan in his arms.

They do fit in the trunk, despite what Heather thought. She just hopes they don't wake up in there like she did.

Heather stays at the house, another of Billy's suspected mercies, her not having to go back to that *place*. Her job is instead to scrub the carpets. Hide the weapons. Make the crime scene spotless so the little sister won't figure anything out.

She puts the beer bottle in the trash can out back with the rest. The ashtray comes clean easily in the sink. She pours bleach on the carpet and gags down what's left.

In some part of her mind, she knows all of the blood stains aren't from what happened tonight. Some of them are months old, there

because of something to do with Billy, she thinks.

She can't even remember what happened, or how she knows it anymore. The monster is taking more and more of her memories. That scares her more than anything else that happened tonight. That she'll be gone, watching herself do these things without even being able to recognize her until she dies like the shadow promised.

A prickling on the back of her neck tells her Billy's close. The rumble of his engine and three doors slamming tells her two things: that the plan had worked, and that she'd lost at least several hours in her own head.

The front door opens, and Billy kneels down where she's working the stains out of the shag. She doesn't know where Susan and Neil go after that, but they won't do any harm. Not yet at least.

The monster is done with them for now. Nothing but a loaded silence ringing in their ears, just an empty feeling settled deep in their bones that was both relieving and terrifying.

At least, that is until the girl comes looking.

Heather feels her presence reaching out to her first, then if she closes her eyes, she can hear her. If she focuses hard enough, she can see her in the dark. The girl is looking for her.

All night Heather's been searching for her way out, for someone or something to save her. This might be her only chance. She shows the girl what she can, fragmented pieces of what she's still able to remember.

It's comforting just to know she's there. The monster has done its best to steal her hope, but this could be their saving grace.

But then Billy puts his hand on her thigh, and the darkness collapses, the girl's image turning to smoke. They had been caught.

Her blood runs freezing cold. Her head is pounding. Her mouth tastes like copper and chemicals and asphalt. Billy says everything is going to be okay now, and Heather has no choice but to believe him.